

# **GUAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRACTICAL NURSING PROGRAM REVIEW**

## **CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**NOVEMBER 15, 2017**

### **Introduction**

The Practical Nursing program started January 2006 and has run continuously on a 12-month basis. In spring 2010, the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners (GBNE) conducted a site visit at the College campus, touring the facilities and met with faculty and staff. In October of 2012, the department presented its annual report and plan of action to the Board. The Board identified specific objectives to be resubmitted with evidence pending approval. Resubmission of the department's annual report was provided at the July 2013 GBNE board meeting. The PN program then received full approval in August 2013. The program returned to probationary status November 2016 following delayed-submission of required board reports. Additionally, low NCLEX passing rates and the number of graduates sitting for the NCLEX-PN exam concerned the board. On September 14, 2017, the Nursing & Allied Health Administrator, Dorothy-Lou Duenas, Dr. Gina C. Tudela, Trades & Professional Services Dean, Dr. Rene Ray Somera Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dr. Mary A.Y. Okada, GCC President met with the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners to discuss the following concerns:

1. The NCLEX-PN Program first time pass and attrition rates.
2. Current passing rate of the PN 2016 cohort
3. Low numbers of PN graduates taking the exam
4. Annual report that lacks specificity in addressing board concerns

As a result of the meeting, GBNE recommended that GCC PN Program consider the possibility of a hiatus to provide the College with dedicated time to address the above concerns. The department has therefore, taken the necessary steps to conduct a comprehensive program review to address these concerns.

### **Terminology**

NCLEX-PN: National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurse (developed and administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN).

## **A. Practical Nursing First-Time Pass & Current Rates**

### **Description:**

The Nursing & Allied Health Department has admitted on average 30 students per cohort for the last five years. The numbers are dependent on full-time faculty. The selection process includes verification of completion of all general education and pre-requisite courses, program grade-point average of 2.5 or higher, essay, and entrance exam test score.

Practical Nursing Graduates are required to take the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) NCLEX-PN exam to gain licensure to practice in the field of nursing. Every three years, the NCSBN revises the test plan with the most recent revisions in 2013 and 2016. According to Serembus (2016), national first-time pass rates drop the year following changes to the NCLEX test plan.

The last four years have seen a decrease in NCLEX passing rates, below 75% and the length of time graduates are taking to test for the NCELX exam (Table 1). Additionally, high attrition numbers continue to be of concern to the board and department. ATI Nursing Research brief (2017) defines nursing student attrition as “The percentage of students from the original cohort who do not complete the program in a specified time frame.” Low numbers of nurse graduates and high attrition rates are common concerns among many schools of nursing (Harris, Rosenberg & O’Rourke, 2013).

**Guam Community College PN First-Time Passing & Attrition Rates per Cohort**

<b>COHORT</b>	<b>Spring Admit</b>	<b>Summer Admit</b>	<b>GRADUATES</b>	<b>Attrition</b>	<b># WHO TOOK NCLEX</b>	<b>1st Time PASS Rate</b>	<b>FAILED</b>	<b>NOT TAKEN</b>	<b>PASS RATE</b>
2017	23	19	Semester ongoing	4					
2016	28	24	18	10	17	12	5	1	71%
2015	32	23	23	9	22	12	10	1	55%
2014	30	24	21	9	20	11	9	1	55%
2013	31	22	17	14	14	9	5	3	64%
2012	27	23	19	8	16	12	4	3	75%

**Table 1.**

## Evaluation:

The faculty anticipated that the NCLEX-PN pass rates of the 2014 cohort would decrease due to the changes in the 2013 NCLEX-PN test plan. This is evident in the table above. The hiring of qualified faculty who understand the NCLEX format has been an ongoing concern in the department and may have also contributed to the decreasing pass rates.

In 2016, the department introduced Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) diagnostic tools and tests to augment curriculum, and assist in improving faculty, student and program outcomes. Since the September GBNE Board meeting with GCC Administration, three additional first-time graduates from the 2016 cohort have taken and passed the NCLEX-PN on the first attempt, bringing passing rates for this cohort to 71% a 16% increase since 2015. In order to calculate passing rates the department compares the number of graduates (per cohort) to the number who pass NCLEX-PN on the first attempt. This is similar to how the University of Guam RN program determines their passing rate.

A comparison of other ACCJC Practical Nursing program first-time pass rates within the last five years (Table 2) shows a pattern similar to GCC's PN program. This indicates that while the passing rates remain low, and there is room for improvement, the program has similar findings to other US colleges.

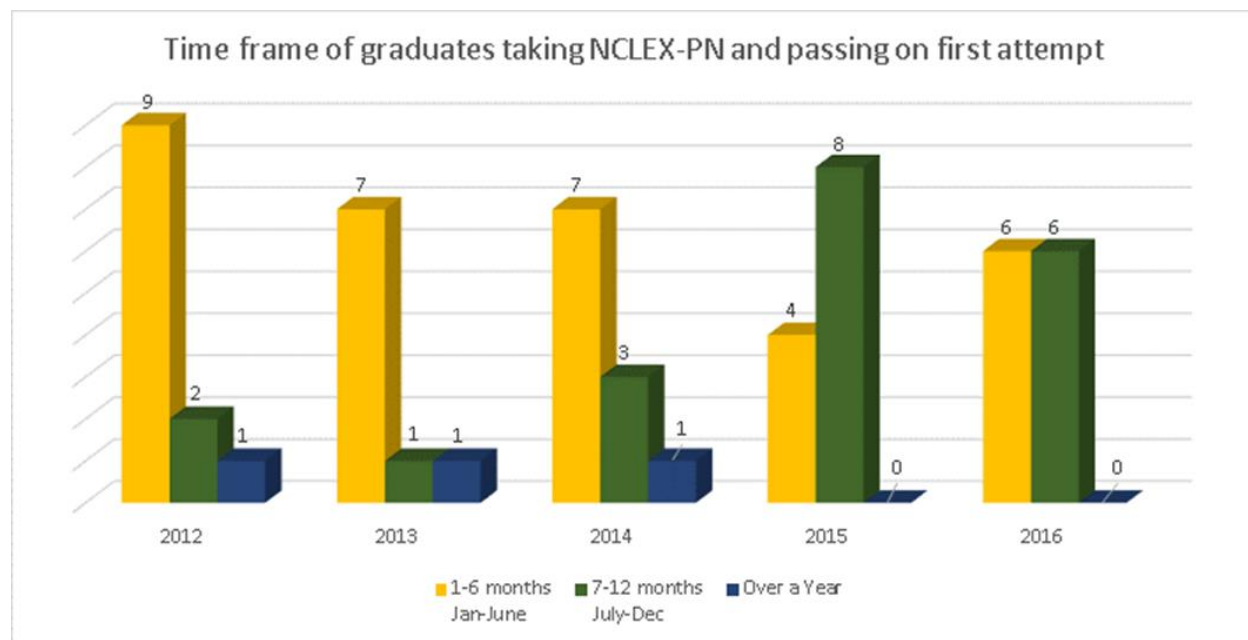
**ACCJC Colleges First Time NCLEX-PN Pass Rates**

ACCJC COLLEGE	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	# Tested	% passed	# Tested	% passed	# Tested	% passed	# Tested	% passed	# Tested	% passed
Chaffey College	41	78%	51	94%	46	67%	56	66%	39	62%
City College of San Francisco	57	79%	50	68%	62	65%	45	67%	36	58%
Glendale Career College	45	82%	59	81%	61	70%	68	57%	53	58%
Pasadena City College	9	67%	21	57%	24	63%	6	33%	12	92%

**Table 2. Provided by the US Department of Consumer Affairs, 2017.**

The length of time to test following graduation has also been a concern of the board and department. The table below provides a breakdown of graduates taking the NCELX-PN within three time frames: 1-6 months, 7-12 months, and over one year following graduation. On average, first-time test takers performed better when completing NCLEX-PN within six months of graduation. The department has recently taken a more proactive approach to reach out to its graduates to support and encourage them with their preparation for the exam. A strategic plan

has been developed to connect with graduates by assigning a faculty member a number of students prior to graduation who will be identified as the NCLEX coach to guide them through the NCLEX-PN examination and preparation process. With this plan, the department's goal is to have a majority of its graduates test within six months following completion of the program.



**Table 3. GCC PN Graduates 2012-2016 Passing on first attempt, by Cohort**

An average of 20 students graduate each cohort with a certificate in Practical Nursing. The Guam Board of Nurse Examiners has been concerned with the high attrition rates. Since 2012, on average approximately 10 students withdrew from the program as a result of personal reasons or an inability to meet curriculum course requirements.

While the attrition rate has been high in the past, the attrition rate of the 2017 cohort has decreased to 4 students. The selection process prior to the 2017 cohort placed a greater emphasis on the grade point average (GPA). Selecting GPA as the main criteria leaves room for error related to the possibility of grade inflation for general education courses. Therefore, with faculty input, the main criteria for entrance to the program was changed to entrance exam scores. Additionally, faculty have mentored at-risk students early in and throughout the course of the program.

In conclusion, while passing rates have been low, as of November 2017, there is a notable increase in the first-time passing rates of the 2016 cohort. Attrition rates have significantly decreased in the 2017 cohort as displayed in Table 1 and we expect this pattern to continue.

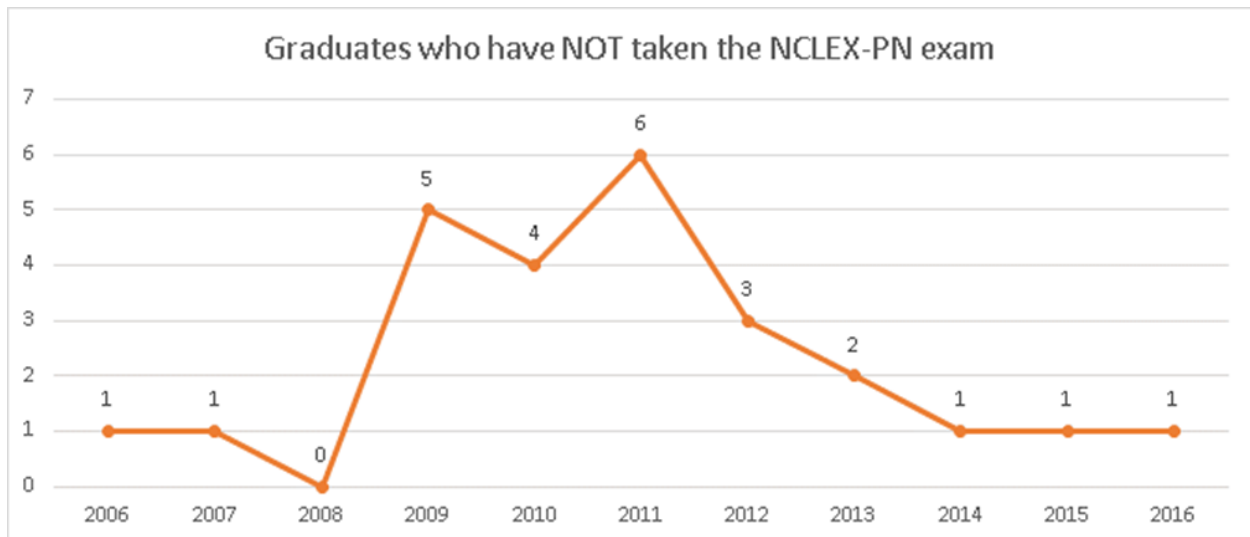
## **B. PN graduates not taking the Exam**

### **Description:**

Based on GCC's graduates who completed the NCLEX-PN during the past five years, the number of students who never took the NCLEX-PN exam has been identified by the board as a concern.

### **Evaluation:**

Within the past couple years, the faculty and department have worked diligently to reach out to the graduates more frequently upon graduation to provide support and guidance for the NCLEX-PN exam. As a result, the numbers of students who fail to take the NCLEX exam has dropped to one student per cohort since 2014.



**Table 4.**

In conclusion, since 2012 there has been a steady decrease in the number students who never took the NCLEX-PN exam. In the past three years, only one student from each cohort has not taken the exam.

## **C. 2018 Incoming Practical Nursing Cohort**

### **Description:**

In summer 2017, the Nursing & Allied Health Department began the selection process for the spring 2018 cohort. Beginning this year, per the previous PN plan of action to GBNE, in addition to the other entry requirements, faculty and the PN administrator included an interview process for prospective students. As a result, a list of prospective students has been developed; however students are still waiting to learn if they have been accepted into the-program.

Students are usually informed by September as to their selection into the program to allow time to organize family and employment support prior to beginning the program. Furthermore, students who are not selected for the program are then able to modify their educational plans.

Since inception, the PN Program has been taught throughout the year, including summer classes. Students have attended class year-long and faculty have taught throughout the summer break. This has led to student and faculty exhaustion because of the limited down time of one-week break between each semester. Program change to include only regular semesters will allow students to absorb course content and prepare for the following semester. This would include program and course curriculum changes.

#### **Evaluation:**

Students are currently contacting the Allied Health Department daily to inquire about their status in the spring 2018 cohort. The GCC Nursing and Allied Health Department at this time has not issued any acceptance letters because the department is waiting for approval from GCC Administration and GBNE in order to start the 2018 cohort. Additionally, the Practical Nursing schedule has not been uploaded to the GCC 2018 spring calendar since the GCC Administrative meeting with GBNE. This is greatly affecting students who have succeeded in meeting entry requirements, and have completed the selection process for admittance to the 2018-2019 PN Program. This issue is also affecting faculty morale.

#### **Recommendations:**

Faculty have developed two options to incorporate a hiatus, but recommend Option 1, as outlined in Table 5. The 2018 cohort would be the first group since 2006 to eliminate summer classes.

##### ***Option 1: Proposed 2018 PN Schedule***

<b>Spring 2018</b>	Semester One
<b>Summer 2018</b>	<b>Recommended Hiatus</b>
<b>Fall 2018</b>	Semester Two
<b>Spring 2019</b>	Semester Three
<b>Summer 2019</b>	NCLEX-PN Review
<b>LPN's into the Guam Workforce</b>	Fall 2019-Spring 2020

Table 5.

- One faculty member would take on the following proposed workload:

##### **Workload**

NCLEX Review 30 hours

NU110 Lab/Clinical 50 hours

BLS 15 hours

Standard IV Chair 45 hours

Curriculum Development/Program Review 45 hours

HL150 or HL202 = 45 hours

- If the PN Program is required by the board to take a Spring 2018 Hiatus the following issues would result:
  - PN cohort would not start until fall 2018
  - Possibility of no faculty to teach the PN Program, as current faculty will look for employment elsewhere, due to a long hiatus.
  - The UOG RN program has been pleased with the caliber of PN graduates and accepts them into the RN Program. This hiatus will delay the intake of PN students into UOG's RN program until 2020 or later.
  - No PN graduates entering workforce until mid-to-late 2020. See table below:

***Option 2: Fall 2018-Spring 2020 PN Program Schedule***

<b>Spring 2018</b>	Hiatus
<b>Fall 2018</b>	Semester One
<b>Spring 2019</b>	Semester Two
<b>Fall 2019</b>	Semester Three
<b>Spring 2020</b>	NCLEX Review for Graduates
<b>LPN's into the Guam Workforce</b>	Summer-Fall 2020

**Table 6.**

\*Option 2, outlined in Table 6, is not recommended or supported, by the current PN Faculty,

#### **D. Course Credits**

##### **Description:**

Currently, the GCC PN program has a total of 30 general education and pre-requisite credits which must be completed in order to apply for the Certificate in Practical Nursing Program. Additionally, there are a total of 35 program credits requirements needed for program completion. Therefore, a total of 65 credits are required to obtain a Certificate in Practical Nursing. The program is currently three consecutive semesters. The number of credits, length of the program, and visibility of the general education requirements are not clearly listed in the college catalog. Furthermore, the archival of pre-nursing has raised questions regarding the transparency of the pre-requisite expectations for the program.

**Evaluation:**

During the program review, the Nursing & Allied Health Department compared GCC PN Program credits to other ACCJC PN Programs and found that our credit numbers are similar to other colleges. Seven ACCJC Practical/Vocational Nursing programs with NCLEX-PN pass rates of 80-100% were analyzed based on their pre-requisite requirements, length of the program, semester breakdown and total credits. These programs included Kapiolani Community College, Allan Hancock College, Bakersfield College, Butte Community College, Chaffey College, Citrus College, and Southwestern College. All seven programs had a range of 40-68 program credits. The total did not include pre-requisite course requirements. Pre-requisite course credits for all seven schools ranged from a total of 12-30 credits. All program credits analyzed were outlined for the certificate of achievement in practical or vocational nursing. The colleges reviewed also included an option for the completers to continue their education for an Associate Degree in Nursing. Furthermore, it was also noted that a majority of the programs required a nursing assistant license as a pre-requisite for entry into the program.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the findings stated in this report the faculty and administrator recommend the following to address the concerns of the board and increase program outcomes:

- Program faculty will review the current program curriculum to complete updates to final courses and overall program documents.
- Program entry and pre-requisite course requirements will be updated and displayed in the catalog.
- Faculty will work with the Curriculum Review Committee to finalize program and course curriculum documents.
- Curriculum documents will reflect all PN courses must be passed with 75% or greater.
- Possible considerations to include CNA as a pre-requisite for entry into the program will be discussed as curriculum revisions are being made.
- Emphasis on pre-admittance exam results as main selection criteria into the program.
- Incorporate Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) pre-admittance exam.
- Faculty continue to mentor at-risk students in first semester and throughout the program.
- Faculty mentor at-risk students during the summer session for each cohort
- Encourage students to take NCLEX-PN exam within six months
- Continue the call out system and survey for all recent and past graduates to gather data related to their NCLEX readiness, testing, licensing, employment status, and continuation of their education (implemented Fall 2017).



- Faculty mentorship and advisement for current students and graduates (NCLEX coach). This mentorship program was established in the fall semester in an effort to reach out to our final graduates from the 2016 cohort to assist and encourage them with their preparation for the NCLEX exam. Each faculty divided up the number students remaining to take the exam and scheduled an appointment to meet with these students. As a result, three students have passed the NCLEX following the board meeting in September bringing our **NCLEX-PN pass rate to 71%**.
- Continue the use of the ATI diagnostic tools provided to assess NCLEX readiness (implemented 2017). The results of the test are used to help the graduate focus their preparation prior to testing. The NCLEX coach mentorship program is currently being used for the present cohort using the ATI diagnostic exam prior to the completion of each course.
- Offer a comprehensive NCLEX-PN review and increase hours from 20 to 50 to ensure students are better prepared to take the NCLEX exam.
- One faculty to take less hours from Spring 2018 cohort and directly support graduating students, including one-on-one advising.
- Faculty will share NCLEX review to ensure course content is taught by faculty who are expert in the content area.
- NCLEX-PN Review will be taught with greater emphasis using the 2017 NCSBN Test Plan.
- Incorporate technology into the NCLEX review process (NCLEX mastery app, NCLEX review websites).
- Follow department strategic plan for professional development to attend NCSBN NCLEX-PN test plan workshops that specifically update faculty in exam changes and course content.
- Revise program curriculum to remove the summer session and only run the program during the regular semesters, starting with the 2018 cohort. This will extend the PN program from 12 months to 18 month course.
- Students accepted into the 2018 cohort will graduate at the end of spring 2019 and will be supported by faculty via an NCLEX Review class, summer 2019. Graduates will be encouraged to take NCLEX-PN within six months of graduation.
- Recommend accepting 16-20 students in spring 2018 cohort and provide an Instructor to Student Ratio of 1:8.
- One faculty will work towards completing proposed recommendations, support PN Administrator, and organize an NCLEX-PN Review at no cost to the graduates using grant funding.

In summary, a program review was conducted by the PN faculty and administrator from the Nursing & Allied Health department. The following findings are evident:

1. Three first-time test takers from the 2016 PN cohort passed the NCLEX-PN exam since the GCC Administrative meeting with GBNE in September.
2. The 2016 cohort passing rate is now at 71%, a 16% increase from the 2015 cohort and an overall increase since 2012.
3. The 2017 cohort attrition rate of four, is the lowest since 2012.

To meet the board's request for a possible hiatus, the faculty support a program change to include only regular semesters, and eliminate PN classes during the summer. To support potential 2018 students who have completed all pre-requisite requirements for entry into the program, the faculty recommend starting in spring 2018. Faculty will support and provide a comprehensive 50-hour NCLEX-PN review for the 2017 graduates for the goal of taking the NCELX exam within six months. Faculty will finalize program and course curriculum changes with the support of the curriculum review committee. ATI tools and diagnostic tests will continue to be administered and the ATI TEAS entrance exam will be implemented in the selection process for the fall 2019 cohort.

## References

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